

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Congressman Michael A. Arcuri (D-NY) today announced that the U.S. House of Representatives approved their request and provided \$3.65 million for the construction of a new state-of-the-art grape genetics research facility for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS). The House members requested the fund as part of the Agriculture Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2010, which the House approved yesterday.

"The Grape Genetic Research Center will provide a modern, expanded facility for our nation's leading grape experts to identify ways to grow and develop grapes in a much more effective way that will boost supplies for farmers and provide New Yorkers and all Americans with superior grapes and grape products," Hinchey said. "The grape industry is a critical part of New York's economy and these federal funds will support it and help it thrive even more."

"This funding will be a great boost to the work that will be done at the grape genetics lab, which will be critical for the agriculture community and New York State's economy as a whole," Arcuri said, "Improving the way that growers cultivate and process their grapes and studying the best ways to provide for healthy and strong grape crops will allow our growers to be the leader in the industry and will mean more jobs in Upstate New York."

The funds that Hinchey and Arcuri obtained from the House will go toward construction of the nearly \$30 million ARS facility that will focus on research programs to make U.S. grape growers and grape products more competitive. The Center for Grape Genetic Research will replace the current outdated ARS facilities in Geneva with a state-of-the-art research building. If this funding gains final approval, Congress would have appropriated a total of nearly \$16.8 million for the center. ARS has completed planning, design, and site prep work. The agency is ready to commence construction as soon as the balance of construction funds is appropriated.

Building the Center for Grape Genetics Research will allow ARS to expand the current research program from eight positions currently devoted to grape genetics to approximately 30 positions (12 scientists, 18 technicians and other support personnel). Scientists at the Center for Grape Genetic Research focus their research on: improving the yield and quality of wine, table, and juice grapes; developing strategies to fight plant diseases and pests that afflict vineyards; helping farmers implement sound environmental practices; and promoting the long-term sustainability of the wine and grape industry in New York and throughout the country.

The \$7 billion New York wine and grape industry supports more than 900 family owned vineyards, 206 wineries, and 3,700 jobs. New York is the third largest wine producing state in the country, with the second largest wine consuming population. Three million people visit New York wineries each year, with over one-third of visitors coming from out-of-state. Research is one of the keys to continued growth of the wine and grape industry.

The Senate now has to take up its own version of the Agriculture Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2010.